

in cattle. Finally, language was included to again urge the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, APHIS, to indemnify a Connecticut poultry producer who undertook a successful emergency vaccination protocol 2 years ago.

So while I am pleased that there are a few items specifically for my constituents, I remain deeply troubled by the path this Congress is taking as it tries to cut spending for programs that benefit our most vulnerable populations while at the same time planning for tax cuts for the most wealthy, who neither need nor, on the whole, seek the extravagance that the majority insists on heaping upon them.

The Senate conferees are to be commended for pushing hard for increases in food and nutrition programs, including the McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program, but at the same time, House conferees insisted on the option of privatization of the food stamp process. That is often code word for closing down local centers and relying more and more on remote call centers and the Internet. This puts a disproportionate burden on those people who need the services most. I know that in my State of Connecticut, this action could adversely impact 109,250 households and that number is likely to grow. Unfortunately, the Republican-controlled Congress often sees privatization as the panacea for saving money. Instead, studies often find that contracting out these services often costs more money. But the problem doesn't stop there. As Congress moves forward with the budget reconciliation process, we will have to come to terms with the fact that the House has insisted on draconian cuts of nearly a billion dollars in the food stamp program. If this number were to stand, nearly 300,000 low-income individuals could be denied benefits. The majority in Congress refuses to increase the minimum wage. It refuses to increase low-income heating assistance, despite dire predictions of record heating costs this winter. Now Congress is on the verge of cutting off 300,000 people from food assistance. Such a move is irresponsible, and it is unconscionable.

Finally, the House conferees insisted on denying American consumers with simple information about the meat they eat. As our colleagues know, mandatory meat labeling was included in the 2002 farm bill, which I supported. The labeling of seafood already started but meat labeling, at the behest of a few powerful lobbyists and a few Members of Congress, continues to be delayed. Hundreds of organizations around the country, including farmers, producers, consumer groups, and individuals overwhelmingly support country-of-origin labeling, COOL. The fiscal year 2006 House appropriations bill effectively delayed meat labeling by refusing to allow any funds to be used to implement COOL, while the Senate bill did not change the requirement. During conference on this bill, the House,

with no consultation with the Senate and with no vote, unilaterally extended the COOL delay until 2008, beyond what even the House language did. Labeling would increase consumer confidence and assist agricultural producers.

So, while there are many laudable provisions in the agricultural appropriations bill, several provisions caused me to cast a vote against this bill.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 9:35 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Branden, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, without amendment:

S. 1285. An act to designate the Federal building located at 333 Mt. Elliott Street in Detroit, Michigan, as the "Rosa Parks Federal Building".

The message also announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1691. An act to designate the Department of Veterans Affairs outpatient clinic in Appleton, Wisconsin, as the "John H. Bradley Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic".

H.R. 4061. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the management of information technology within the Department of Veterans Affairs by providing for the Chief Information Officer of that Department to have authority over resources, budget, and personnel related to the support function of information technology, and for other purposes.

The message further announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 281. Concurrent resolution congratulating the Chicago White Sox on winning the 2005 World Series.

The message also announced that the House disagree to the amendments of the Senate to the bill H.R. 2528 making appropriations for military quality of life functions of the Department of Defense, military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes, and agree to the conference asked by the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon; and

appoints the following members as the managers of the conference on the part of the House: Mr. WALSH, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mrs. NORTHUP, Mr. SIMPSON, Mr. CRENSHAW, Mr. YOUNG of Florida, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REHBERG, Mr. CARTER, Mr. LEWIS of California, Mr. EDWARDS, Mr. FARR, Mr. BOYD, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. CRAMER, and Mr. OBEY.

The message further announced that the House disagree to the amendments of the Senate to the bill H.R. 2862 making appropriations for Science, the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes, and agree to the conference asked by the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon; and appoints the following members as the managers of the conference on the part of the House: Mr. WOLF, Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina, Mr. KIRK, Mr. WELDON of Florida, Mr. GOODE, Mr. LAHOOD, Mr. CULBERSON, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. LEWIS of California, Mr. MOLLOHAN, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island, Mr. FATTAH, and Mr. OBEY.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 491 of the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1098(c)), the order of the House of January 4, 2005, and upon the recommendation of the Majority Leader, the Speaker reappoints the following member on the part of the House of Representatives to the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance for a three-year term: Ms. Judith Flink of Morton Grove, Illinois.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 11:37 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following bill:

H.R. 2744. An act making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

The enrolled bill was signed subsequently by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

At 12:46 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Chiappardi, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House disagree to the amendment of the Senate to the bill H.R. 889 to authorize appropriations for the Coast Guard for fiscal year 2006, to make technical corrections to various laws administered by the Coast Guard, and for other purposes, and agree to the conference asked by the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon; and appoints the following members as the managers of the conference on the part of the House from the committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, for consideration of the House bill and the Senate amendment, and modifications